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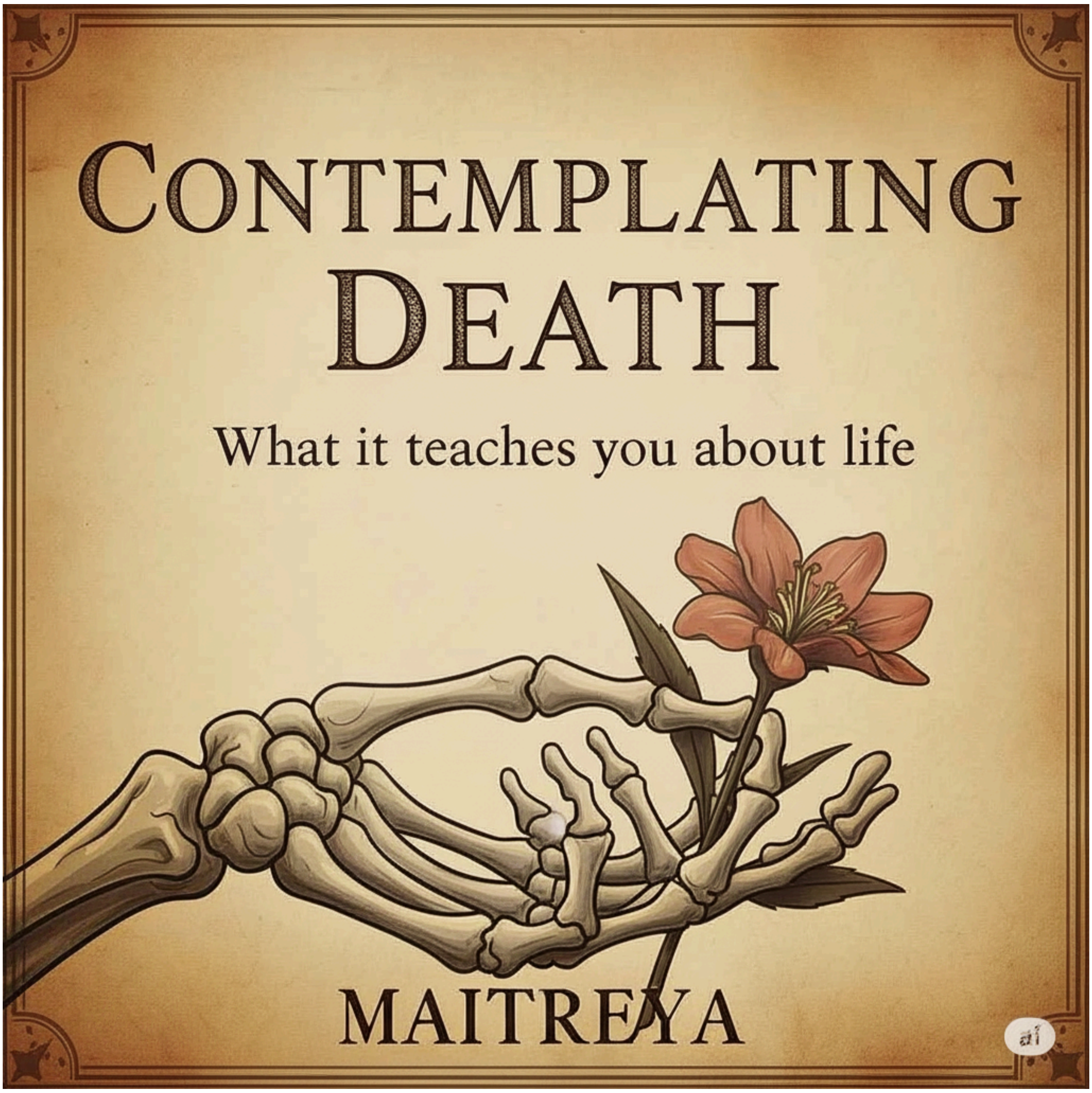

CONTEMPLATING DEATH

What it teaches you about life

MAITREYA

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What This Book Is All About

Introduction: What is this book all about?

The basic purpose of this book is to dispel the fog surrounding the phenomena of Death and to help the reader make sense of what death is all about and thus what life is all about, for only in the mirror of death is the entire meaning of life reflected.

Here I, Maitreya will take you on a guided tour exploring what different religions and philosophy teaches us about death as well as I will be sharing my own personal experiences with Death. The purpose is not to overwhelm the reader but give him/her a brief overview of all that death teaches us about life and how to live life well, so that in the mundane affairs of life, we don't forget the ultimate purpose of life, which I will reveal in the coming chapters.

Chapter 1 asks us a fundamental question: Why do we fear death and then how do we overcome that fear, for fear of death has been buried deep inside us and overwhelms us every time we have to face the death of somebody whom we have known. Here I will also be discussing how to overcome that fear, which is simply by facing it, and understanding it and its role in the grand scheme of life, for we fear only that which is unknown to us. In this respect death is much like a rope which appears like a snake in the darkness but when light is shed on it, its true nature is revealed and we find that there was nothing to fear in the first place.

Chapter 2 discusses the important question of what is meaningful in life in the face of death. We all know that we are going to die someday but we don't know when. Generally therefore we live as if death is not there at all, we live oblivious to the reality of death but even if we decide to think seriously about death, it's not as easy to contemplate as it may sound. It can make you hopeless about life and rather than finding meaning, you may end up parroting that the whole life is meaningless as it happened to me.Therefore, contemplation of death is a serious matter and should be done wisely.

Chapter 3 discusses the famous story from the katha upanishad where a child named Nachiketa reaches the abode of Yama to meet death and discusses the truth about death from the lord of death.Here, for the first time we will come to know what is the ultimate purpose of life and how to attain the state of immortality.

Chapter 4 shares with you the tragic story of Lord shiva and sati. How her death broke Shiva and what lessons are there for us mortals in it.

Chapter 5 discusses the taoist attitude toward life and death. It exhorts the reader to embrace this attitude in life which the master embodies and thus live in accordance with the way things are.

Chapter 6 discusses what the great stoic philosophers like Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and Cicero thought about death and how these psychologists' advice helps us in living well with the reality of death.

Chapter 7 discusses the painful death of Jesus Christ on the cross and what symbolic meaning it contains about life. Jesus was one of the purest souls ever born on earth and how man's death changed history and gave birth to a new religion by the name christianity. It holds deep meanings for us to live our lives in accordance with the teachings of christ.

Chapter 8 gives you an overview of what Islam teaches you about life, death, God and man's place in the grand scheme of things. It reminds us thaty our true home is somewhere else and encourages us to do good deeds.

Chapter 9 gives you the Buddhist perspective on Death and encourages you to make meditation a part of your daily practice. Here Buddha asks us to be vigilant day and night and increase the level of our consciousness to penetrate the true nature of reality and become free of its limited nature once and for all.

Chapter 10 discusses Bhagavad Gita’s take on Death where Arjuna asks this perennial question on Death to Krishna and Krishna’s answer gives you a clue to what to do to attain Krishna consciousness and become free from the claws of death forever.

Chapter 11 poses an important question: What will you do if you come to know the exact moment of when you are going to die or more specifically, suppose you have a week’s time to live, how are you going to live. Here the famous story of King Parikshit who faced a similar dilemma in the ancient past, is shared to give context to our question and to find the answer to this question.

Chapter 12 reflects on the life and death of another great king Bharata, under whose name India has been named Bharat. The story teaches you the role of karma in the process of death and with this story we wind up our discussion on death thus leaving you with an enlightened understanding of what death is , what matters in life and how to restructure our lives in accordance with these principles.

The author hopes that continuous meditation on these stories will help dispel the fear of death from the minds of the reader and will draw them near to the deathless.

Chapter 1: Why do we fear death and how to overcome that fear?

Death is the ultimate truth of life. We all know that some day or the other will be the last day of our lives on planet earth but what no one knows is when that day will come? And so we live our lives pretending that death is not there or saying to ourselves that it only comes after old age,after we have lived our lives happily or purposefully so that we are ready to let go and willfully surrender ourselves to this great mystery.

But thinking such is to live in a fool's paradise. You only have to pick up a day's newspaper and you will discover that someone or the other has died. For some, it is murder, some died in terrorist attacks, some due to old age and sickness and some in accidents. The fact that death can take many disguises is what makes it even more overwhelming for us. Who can say when ,how and where you are going to die. Till now, nobody in human history has overcome death and become immortal. Be it Krishna, the superhuman incarnation of Lord Narayana, or the enlightened Buddha or the crucified Jesus, you name it and they have all met their end. What religions offer is an unverified existence of the afterlife with God judging us for how we lived our brief existence on earth and what philosophy offers is mere consolation that we must accept death as a natural part of life. For example stoics suggest that we should worry about what we can control and leave those things which we cannot control. Since death is beyond our control, we should not worry about it and accept it as a natural fact of life.This, they suggest, will help reduce the fear of death. But I question- can you really reason yourself into believing that you don't fear death. Only the actual moment of death will confirm how much you really succeeded in this.

So what to do? Are we doomed to go into oblivion and live with the constant fear of death? or should we do something about it? As far as the common man is concerned, he is really helpless about it and he does nothing. He remains paralyzed and simply accepts whatever logic is provided by the religion of his birth. But you and I, those who want to live a conscious life can do something. Let me suggest two things:

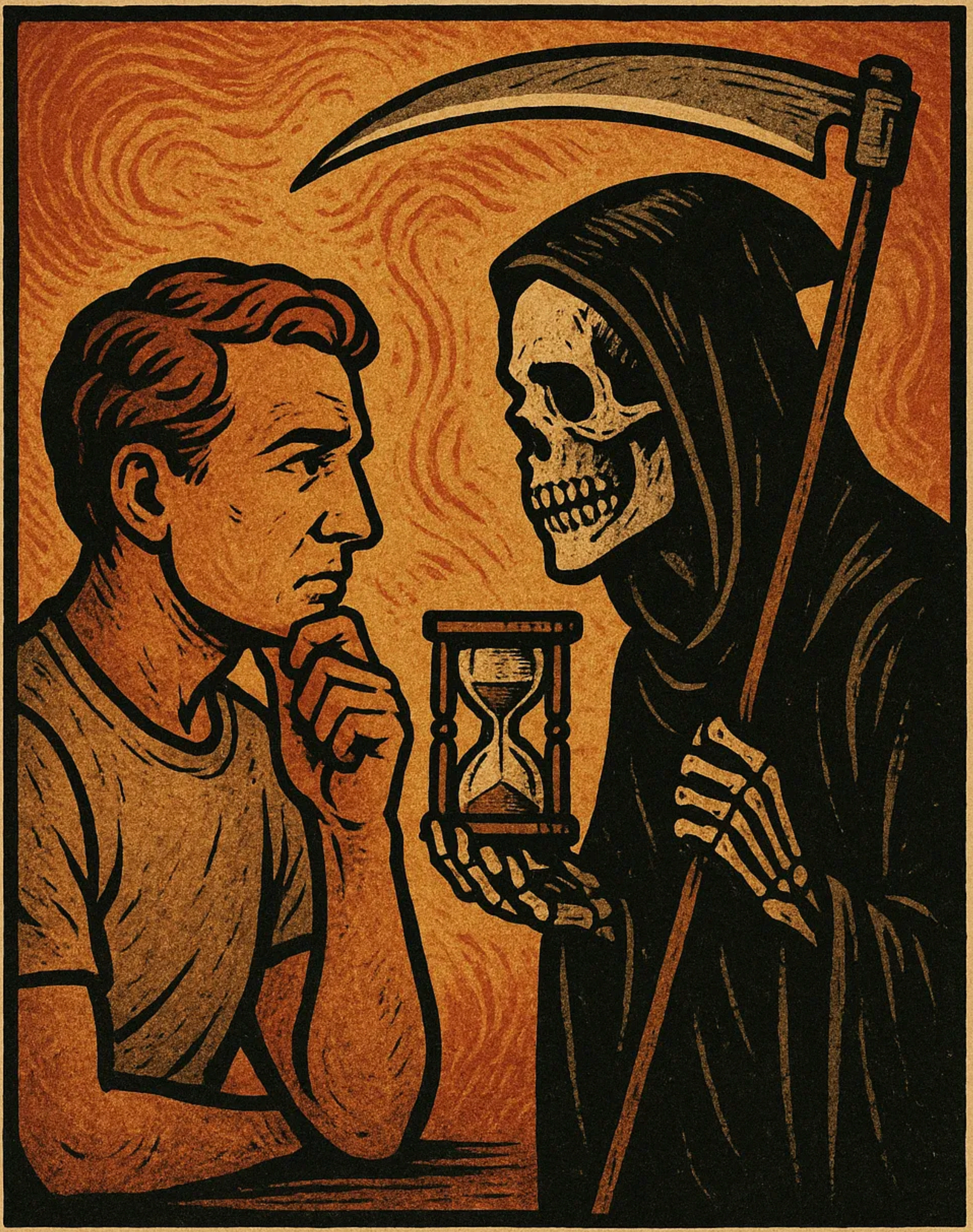
1. **Die in a dream**: Dreams offer the most practical way to overcome the fear of death. If you gain lucidity and decide to die. You face the situations where the death of the dream body is inevitable, it will create the same psycho-chemical response in your body that you will face as if you were actually facing your death.

2. The second thing you can do is to contemplate death everyday, so that you can prioritize your life and spend time doing things which mean something to you. In other words, reminding us that our time is short, we can spend our remaining time living purposefully so that we don’t have regrets when the moment of death comes, that we didn’t live the lives we wanted to live.

   That’s all I have to say on the first topic.
   Thank you.

Ch.2: What is meaningful in life in the face of death?

MEANING OF LIFE



IN THE FACE OF DEATH

Yesterday I preached the art of contemplating death, our own mortality to get a clear understanding of what matters in life. So you may ask, have I practiced it myself or is it just some cool writing stuff, fancy philosophical musing on death. My answer is yes, I have contemplated my own mortality and have varied experiences with it.

The year was 2014. I had just graduated from my college with an engineering degree and went to Delhi to prepare for civil services. It was during those days when a close relative died. At the same time, the dad of my close friend Vikas also died. Hearing those news troubled me and when I would start reading the newspaper for preparation, all I would notice was the naked dance of death everywhere. Soon it became very depressing. The more I contemplated death, the more it literally sapped away all my life force and I would sit paralyzed for hours in my bed. Everything seemed meaningless and hopeless. I wondered why so much labor, so much hardship when our ultimate destination is to burn into ashes and be flown away into the river. What kind of journey is it where we appear on the stage of life only to disappear from it. It all looked hopeless and death appeared to be the great enemy of life, which destroyed everything that is beautiful in life.

So yes, contemplating death is a serious matter and must not be done for long. The only benefit the contemplation of death renders is that it clears the fog from our life as to what really matters, for it forces us to think about what we are doing with our lives. Are we chasing genuine happiness or illusory success? For example you may want to be a big man in this world and earn a lot of money but by chasing that goal, if you are missing the love of your mother who is always there for you, I think you need to prioritize your values.

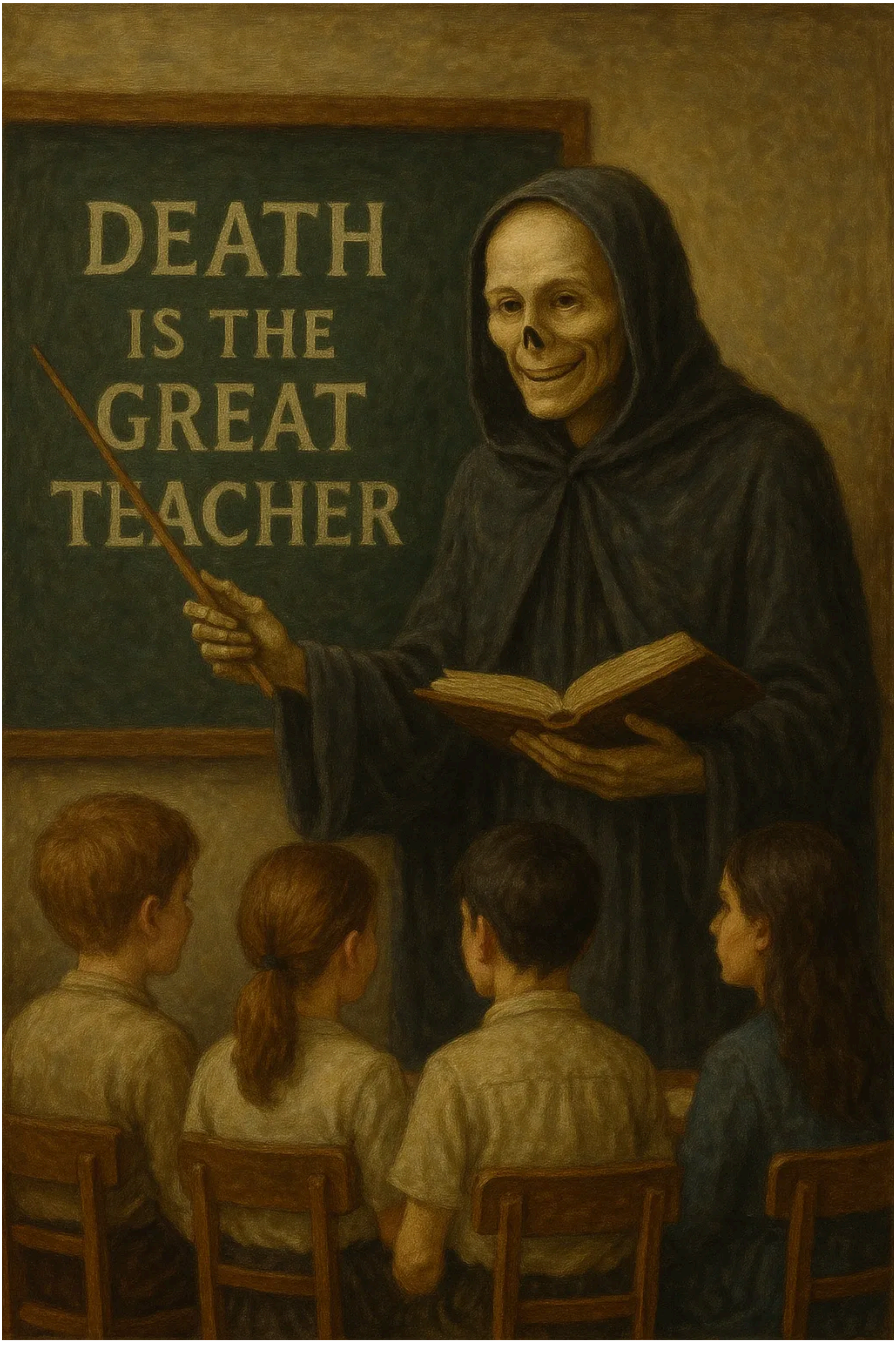
I did and I came to value what I already am blessed with in life. Knowing that my mother is not going to be there always ,makes me realize that I should spend some quality time with her and return her the same love that she so generously shared with me.

Contemplating death also made me curious to understand what life really is all about and so I began my search for answers in different philosophies and world religions. Different people gave different answers, like Hinduism and Islam teaches you that the purpose of life is to love God, Buddha said the purpose of life is to overcome all suffering and attain the state of nirvana, for Jesus it was suffering patiently for the love of God, for stoics it was living a life of virtue and so on. Each perspective had something valuable to offer but at the end I realized that life is really a multidimensional phenomena. There can be as many meanings to existence as there are human beings, the universe has endowed man with reason and so he has the capability to craft his own meaning in this life. This I feel is the great beauty of life. Each individual is a unique expression of life and so as free rational agents, can decide what appeals meaningful to him. Thus meaning could be found in both the grand contemplation of absolute as well as a healthy nourishing meal that you had today but was not available to appreciate it in the moment.

Lastly you may be curious to know how I came out of my depressing contemplation of death. The answer is simple: I stopped doing what I was doing and allowed normalcy to return to me. By the time my father died in 2023, I was mature enough to realize that death was inevitable to come and take my father away but I will not allow it to take my peace too and so I faced it with as much equanimity as I could muster.

Thankyou for reading this story. That’s all I have to say for now.

Ch.3: The story of Nachiketa and death


DEATH
IS THE
GREAT
TEACHER

Once upon a time in ancient India a Brahmin named Vajashrava was performing a yagya(ritual) to gain religious merit in which he was supposed to give all he considered as precious in dana(donation) to the other brahmins. All was going well but the young child of Vajashrava named Nachiketa noticed a folly. He saw that his father was donating old cows which cannot give milk anymore to other brahmins. So he questioned his father.

Nachiketa: Father, why are you donating old cows to brahmins who could not give milk? What use will it come to them?

Vajashrava: Stop interfering with what I am doing. You are still very small to understand all this.

Nachiketa: Whom will you give me to, father since I am also precious to you. Ain't I?

Vajashrava: Stop asking foolish questions, Nachiketa. Go and play with the kids of your age.

But Nachiketa was persistent with his demand. He kept asking the same question over and over again. This infuriated Vajashrava and in a moment of anger, he spoke: " I give you to Death, Nachiketa. I give you to Death."

Nachiketa took the words of his father seriously and immediately left the home of his father to travel to the abode of death, Yamaloka.

When Nachiketa reached Yamaloka, he found the Lord of death was not there. So he waited for three days there. When finally Lord of death arrived, he was both intrigued and pleased to know that a five year old child had been waiting for him for three days and refused to return home without meeting him.

Death: I am pleased by your persistence that you waited for me for three days in this inhospitable place. So I grant you three boons. Ask what you want?

Nachiketa: Thankyou. The first boon I ask of you is that when I return home, my father should not be angry with me. He should receive me with happiness and peace.

Death: Granted. Ask for the 2nd boon.

Nachiketa: The 2nd boon I ask you is to teach me the secret ritual that leads one to a state of heavenly bliss.

Death: Granted. From here onwards, this ritual will be known as nachiketa yagya. Ask for the 3rd boon.

Nachiketa: I want to know the secret of death. Some say we live after death and others say we die. What is the truth?

Death: This is a sacred mystery. This I can’t tell you. Ask for some other boon.

Nachiketa: But I want to know only this?

Death: Why not I grant you the kingdom of the entire earth, beautiful lovely women’s embrace and all the pleasures of the world. Have them and be happy.

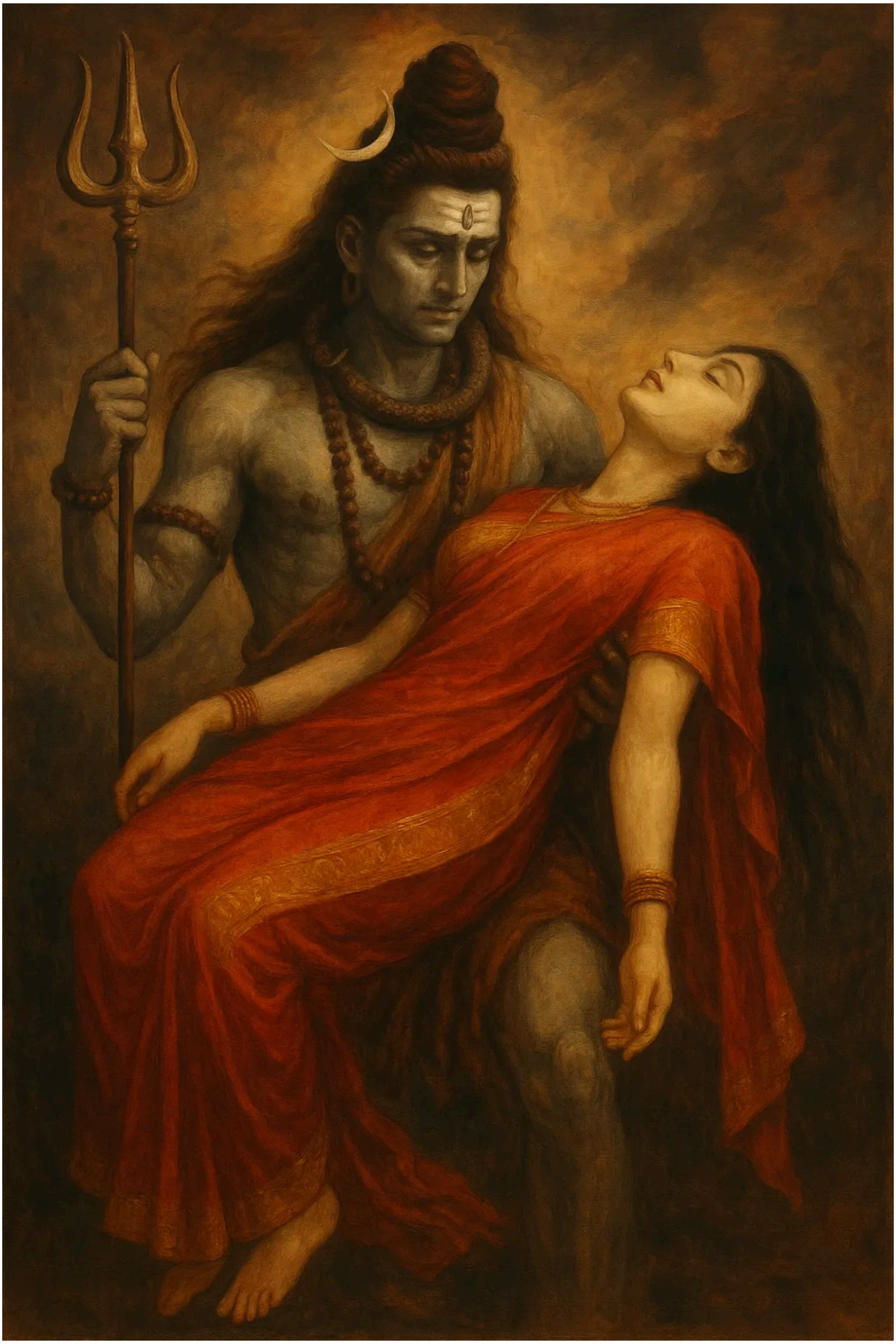
Nachiketa: What will I do with these things which are transient and will fade with time and how will I enjoy them with the fear of you constantly lurking in my mind. I don’t want these things. All I am interested in is knowing the Truth.

Death: Blessed are you, Nachiketa that has chosen the path of Truth over the path of pleasures. Those who are given to a life of sense pleasures die over and over and come back to live in this world but those who seek the truth will finally know the Self within that is beyond my reach and will not be reborn in this sad world. But know that the path to the deathless is full of thorns. Very few people come to know of deathless in this world and still very few make it the goal of their lives to reach the deathless, you can very well wonder how many would attain the self that is beyond all duality and beyond all opposites. Therefore seek that which is your true nature and you will know the sacred mystery of death. I hope I have satisfied you with my response. Now return to your home.

Nachiketa thanked the Lord of death and returned to his home where his father gladly received him back.

Lesson: So you see, Death is not all bad which brings sorrow and grief. It also teaches us the path to the deathless and inspires us to seek the eternal which is the ultimate goal of life and be free from the clutches of death forever.

Ch:4:Sati’s death and Lord Shiva’s grief.



Shiva was a vairagi, a renunciate who had nothing to do with world of pleasure and then Sati, the human incarnation of Mahamaya came into his life. The yogi who was always lost in the contemplation of the deathless, was for the first time enamoured by the form of the devi. For the first time he felt love for a woman that he had not felt before and the good news was that sati herself was attracted to his persona. But not everything was rosy. Being a God, Shiva was all-knowing. He could see into the future that has not yet materialized and what he saw was terrible- the self immolation of sati in the yagya of Prajapati Daksha.

Now you wonder how shiva felt. Shiva knew from the beginning that union of his with sati would bring not love but tragedy. And the helplessness of shiva was that he could not change destiny. So he fiercely resisted sati. He avoided her, made harsh remarks, always told her to not pursue him but each rejection of Shiva made Sati pursue him even more strongly and finally Shiva had to give in to her will and married her. To avoid the terrible destiny, Shiva asked Sati to give him three promises.

1. She would always trust him.
2. She would not disobey him.
3. She would not ask why he asks her to do certain things.

Sati gave him the promises but then the time for that fateful event came. Prajapati Daksha was doing a yagya for the welfare of the world but he didn’t invite either shiva or sati to it. When Sati came to know about it, she wanted to go to the yagya but Shiva refused to go uninvited and asked her too to not go. When she asked him why he is stopping her from going to her father’s house, all Shiva said was that its for her own wellbeing and reminded sati of her promise to him. But Sati could not resist from going.It was as if destiny was propelling her to go there and so she went to the yagya of her father uninvited. When Daksha saw Sati, he spoke harsh words to her about Shiva which Sati could not bear. She realized the folly of disobeying her husband's command and decided to immediately end her life for she felt impure being the daughter of a man like Daksha and thus immolated her into a fire born of her own body. Destiny fulfilled itself and all shiva could do was just sit in meditation with eyes closed. Finally his patience grew thin and he destroyed both the yagya and Daksha's life together. In grief he roamed the world, taking Sati's lifeless body with him everywhere. He cried like a true lover who has lost her beloved and renounced his Godhood which brought him nothing but suffering.

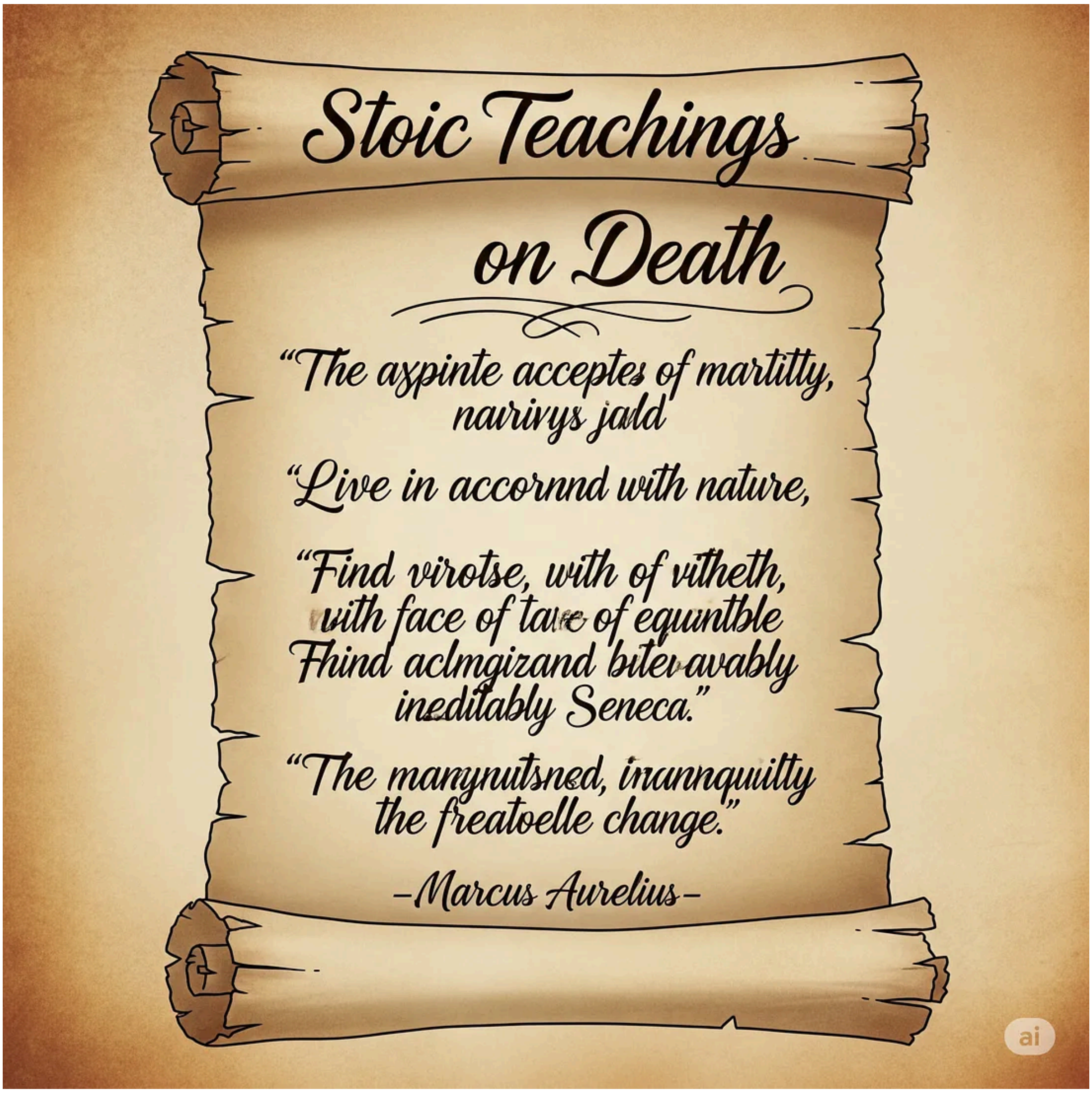
Lesson: We strive for deathless so that we can be free from all suffering but becoming all-knowing can compound your suffering a thousandfold. As humans, we think our suffering is too much but it's little compared to Shiva's suffering who suffered each time he closed his eyes and looked into the future and saw destiny steadily fulfilling itself in such a cruel way.

The 2nd lesson is attachment to outer objects leads to immense suffering, even if it is love for your beloved. Even a God like Shiva suffered when he got attached to his outer lover and could not bear the separation, what would you say of us, mere mortals. Therefore practicing detachment is very crucial if you wish to attain true liberation from all suffering.

Ch:5 Taoist attitude towards life and death

The Master gives himself up to whatever the moment brings.
He knows that he is going to die and he has nothing left to hold on to. no illusions in his mind, no resistances in his body.
He doesn’t think about his actions; they flow from the core of his being.
He holds nothing back from life; therefore he is ready for death
as a man is ready for sleep after a good day’s work.

Ch.6: The Stoics' teachings on Death.


Stoic Teachings
on Death
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narivys jald
“Live in accornnd with nature,
“Find virotse, with of vitheth,
with face of tane of equntble
Fhind aclmgizand biter avably
ineditably Seneca.”
“The manynutsned, irannquiilty
the freatoelle change.”
–Marcus Aurelius–
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The stoics were great contemplators on death. Since death seems to be the annihilation of our existence, it evokes great fear in ordinary mortals but the stoics felt that we fear death because we misunderstand it. They saw death not as an evil to be dreaded but a natural part of life. Further how will death consume us is not in our control, so the stoics suggests to not worry about it but rather in the face of death, we must learn to live nobly and virtuously.

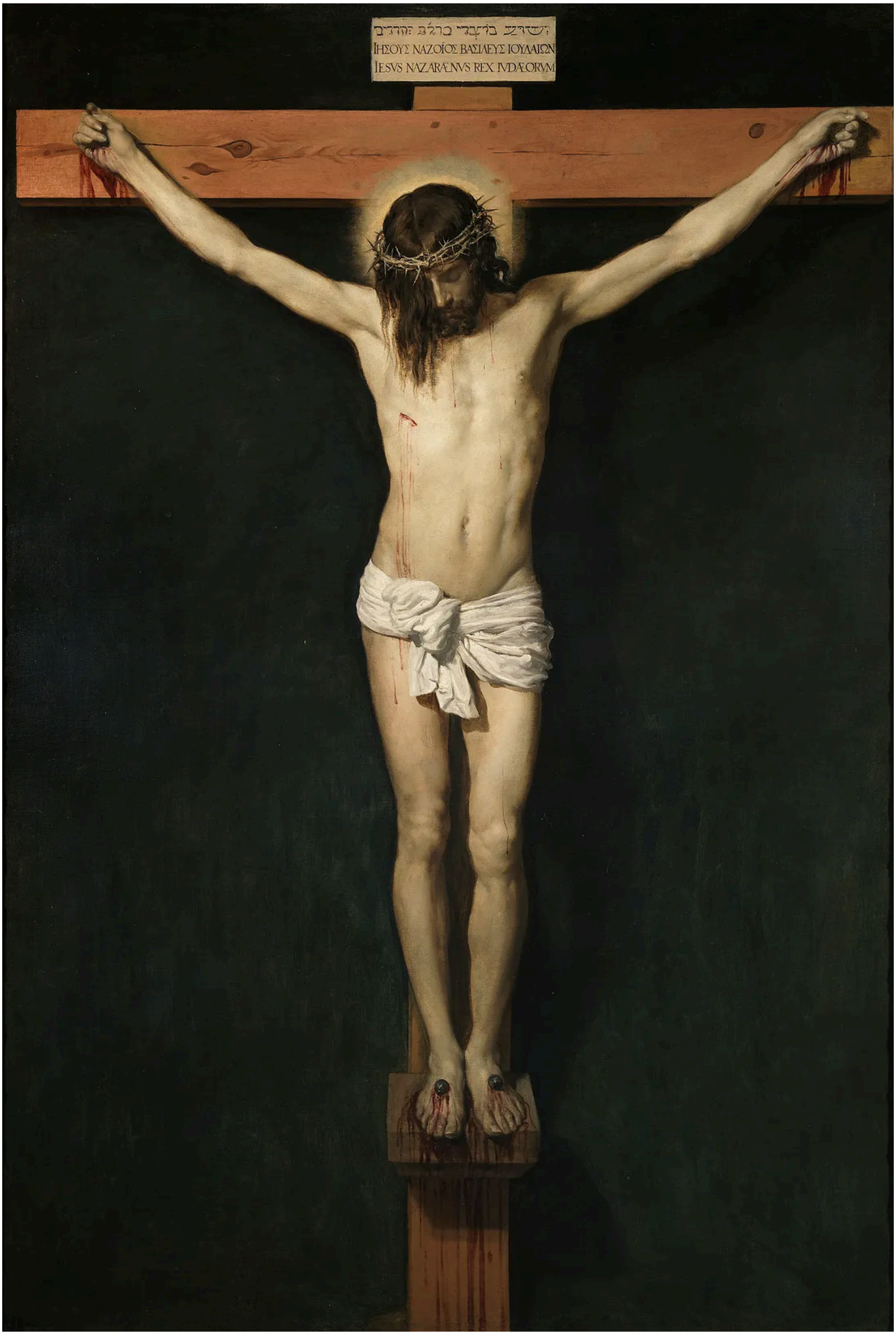
“The whole life of a philosopher … is preparation for death”.-Cicero.

Since nature has put a time limit on our existence, we must contemplate it to live our best lives while we stay on earth and that means cultivation of virtues like fearlessness, courage, truthfulness and so on.
Therefore for philosophers like Seneca, a man who has overcome fear of death has overcome the fear of life. He who has no fear of death will be free from many fears and worries that accompany us while we live on earth. It is considered the greatest achievement of a man on earth.

Further the stoics teaches us to see life and death as one organic whole. Death will not happen at the end of our lives rather it is happening every day and every moment. We first lost our childhood, then our boyhood, then our manhood and so on. Each day passes and with that death consumes a little of us everyday until it finally consumes us whole. So death is much like sleep at the end of the day when we forget our worries and give ourselves to non-existence happily. Since we enjoy sleeping, a person who will come to know the true reality of death will also enjoy death and only when you enjoy death can you truly enjoy life. Before that, life seems to be one big problem which constantly frustrates our efforts to live a happy life for we fear life at every moment until we face our own mortality.

Therefore pretend that you have lived your life and had died and so how will you live the remaining of your lives which is a mere gift for you. Live it in accordance with nature and reason, as something to be grateful for. Thank you.

Ch.7: The death of Jesus Christ and what it means?


ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΝΑΖΟΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ
IESVS NAZARÆNVS REX IVDÆORVM

We all are familiar with the story of Jesus being crucified on the cross for the blasphemy, claiming that he was the messiah of the jews and some accounts tell that he claimed that he was God. However Jesus actions were so radical and ahead of his time that the Jewish religious leaders could not understand him. For example, when a prostitute visited him and asked for forgiveness of her sins, he said he forgave her and asked her to sin no more. Now only God has the power to forgive the sins and so Jesus was claiming equality with God or more radically to say that he was God. Jesus also pointed at the corruption of the Jewish priests which further made them anti-Jesus and so the only punishment of those times for such a crime was death by crucifixion.

Now even in today's world, when a person is given death penalty, we protest. It seems inherently brutal and violates our sentiments that life is sacred, what to say of death by crucifixion which was a very painful way to death and that too of an innocent and pure man like Jesus.

Further in the story of Christ we find that he foretold that he is going to die, for it is God's will. He foretold that he will be betrayed by one of his disciples and that he was simply surrendered to the will of his father, God the almighty. So throughout the trial, he never put forth his case against the claims put by the Jewish religious leaders in front of the roman authorities. He was made to bear the cross and was subjected to the most inhuman sufferings which all Jesus bore patiently.

Then we hear of Jesus asking God to forgive his enemies for 'they know not what they are doing.' and finally Jesus dies and gets resurrected after 3 days. This is the story in essence.

What it all means:

1. Like a lamb put to slaughter for the sins of humans, Jesus was put to death so that the relationship between a pure God and the sinning humanity can be restored. This is the theological meaning of Jesus's death. However we must understand that until we stop sinning altogether by following on the path of righteousness shown by Jesus, his sacrifice will all go to waste.

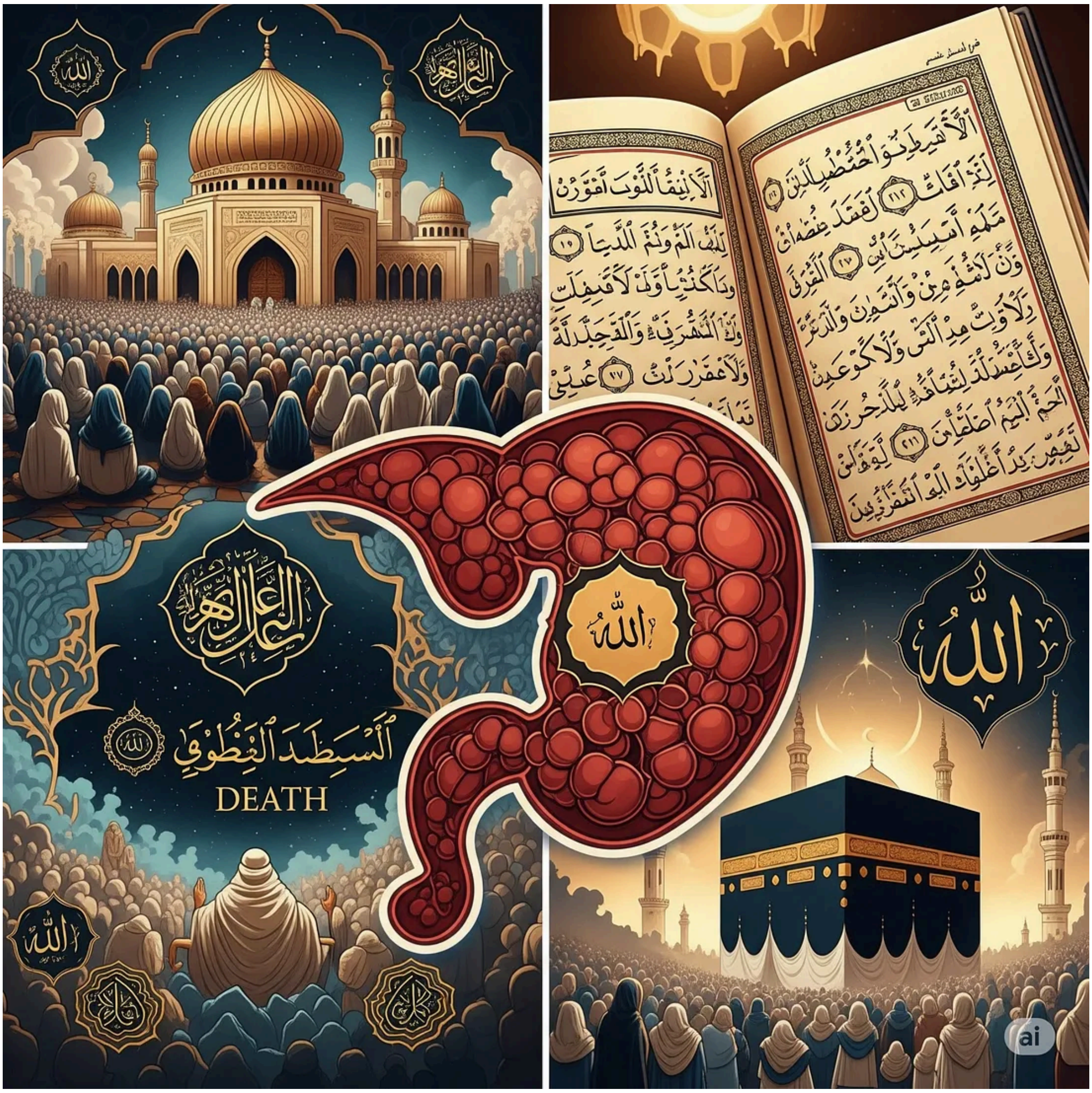
2. Jesus was made to take up his cross till he was put to death on the same cross. This is a symbol for humanity, where we all must take up our cross and bear sufferings patiently ordained by God for us.

3. Jesus asked for forgiveness for the Jewish people, for their ignorance of who he was. Here he was exemplifying what he preached throughout his three year's ministry, which is to love your enemies as much as you love your friends and yourself.

4. Resurrection: This is the victory of the soul over death. In truth we are immortals living a finite existence through this body.

5. Obedience to God's will:Jesus, on many occasions, told his disciples that he has come on Earth to not do his own will but the will of his father, who has sent him. Jesus walked right into death's jaws to fulfil the will of his father, even as he was afraid of dying such a terrible death.

Ch.8: What Islam teach us about Death?



Islam teaches us that Earth is not our true homeland but our spirit is living in exile on earth. The true purpose of living on earth is to be molded into and become what God has truly ordained us to be. According to the Quran, death is not an end but a transition where we shed our caterpillar bodies and metamorphosize into butterfly spirits. In short, death releases us from the limited perception of our body as the reality and opens us to the grander version of us being the spirits. Just like a baby in the womb knows nothing of our physical reality, so are we, in similar fashion who knows nothing of what awaits us after we die but Islam assures us that it is something good.

Further Islam asks us to do good deeds which are the only thing worthy in the eyes of our creator and He judges our merit to belong to the kingdom of God based on the register of deeds. Also Islam asks man to surrender to the will of God and become an instrument of divine will, fulfilling the purpose for which you and I have been created.

In light of the Quran, everything on earth is a gift from Allah to man. Therefore we should be grateful to Him for what he has given to us and what he has taken away from us. Further Quran tells us that all earthly separation from our loved ones who died, is only temporary and we will be meeting them again when we die and become free of the limited perception that we call life. Therefore, the Quran advises us to be like travelers on Earth who rests for a while here and then goes on his eternal journey. Thank you.

Ch.9: Buddha speaks on Death.

Buddha speaks: My dear bhikkhus, today I am going to talk to you about a fundamental fact of life.

Ananda : What is it, tathagata?

Buddha: It is the permanence of death, ananda in this world of impermanence. If you look closely, my bhikkhus, then you will find that death is happening everywhere and every moment. But we humans live in the forgetfulness of death. That is not right living, my bhikkhus.

Ananda: Then what is right living, tathagata?

Buddha: Right living is to live in awareness, ananda. Awareness of the true reality of life. To live consciously is the path, Ananda. Think about it: how many of you are aware of the moment when you fall asleep and how many of you are aware that you are dreaming when you dream. If this is the case, Ananda, think of how difficult it will be to remain aware and conscious through the process of dying and what comes after death?

Buddha continues: This is why the yoga of sleep and dreams play a very important part in the preparation of death. What a real practitioner seeks to do is to keep unfailing and unbroken his awareness of the nature of mind throughout day and night and so use directly the different phases of sleep and dream to recognize and become familiar with what will happen in the bardo during death. Meditation is the practice of daytime and sleep and dream yoga are the practices for nighttime.

Ananda: What happens at the time of death, tathagata?

Buddha: You will discover it for yourself Ananda but know that only two things matter at the time of death:

1. How did we live our lives?
2. What state of mind are we at the moment of death?

Therefore, before death takes over you, bhikkhus, realize the illusory nature of reality. Become a child of illusion, know that reality is dream-like and thus transcend the phenomena of death forever.

All Bhikkhus repeat in one voice: Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

Ch.10: Bhagavad Gita on Death

Arjuna asks- “ What is absolute freedom, Krishna? And how at the hour of death can a man be with you in the spirit?”

Krishna- “ Freedom is union with the deathless. Whoever in his final moments thinks of me only is sure to enter my state of being after his death. Whatever the state of being that a man focusses upon at the end when he leaves his body, to that state of being he’ll

go. Therefore, Arjuna, meditate on me at all times with your whole mind intent on me and you will come to me- never doubt it.
Krishna continues- “ For men whose minds are forever focussed on me, whose love has grown deep for me, I am easy to reach Arjuna. Reaching me, these great souls attain perfection and are no longer born in this fleeting world of sorrow and pain.

Thus the scripture advises us to keep remembering the Lord all the time and then we will surely attain his state at the end of our life.

Ch: 11: What to do when you know you will die in 7 days?

For the past few days we have been contemplating death and what it teaches us about life. We have journeyed afar and have reached the shore where we are asking an important question: What will you do when you know you have a week to live ? For most of us, who have dreams, aspirations, and families, it will come as a shock to believe. It will be the hardest thing to accept, to accept that its going to be over in a week's time. Possibly you will blame such a fate and will try all of your resources to do something that will give you time to live. If you have money, you will go to the best doctors and ask them to give you life but what if you come to know that nothing is going to help you, not even God. You are going to die and this is it, it's written, it’s the end. Even if you come to accept your fate, you may believe that spending time with your loved ones is the best thing to do in the limited time span that you have.

This is how you think what if I tell you that what you should really be doing is nothing of the above. What if I tell you that there was exactly a person who faced a similar fate. He was king Parikshit, the monarch of Bharatvarsha and a worthy descendant of the Pandavas. I am sure you would have heard of the pandavas in mahabharat, even if you know nothing of the parikshit. He was a noble king, who lived his entire life on the path of Dharma and yet he was cursed by an amateur son of a rishi for a slight mistake done in ignorance.

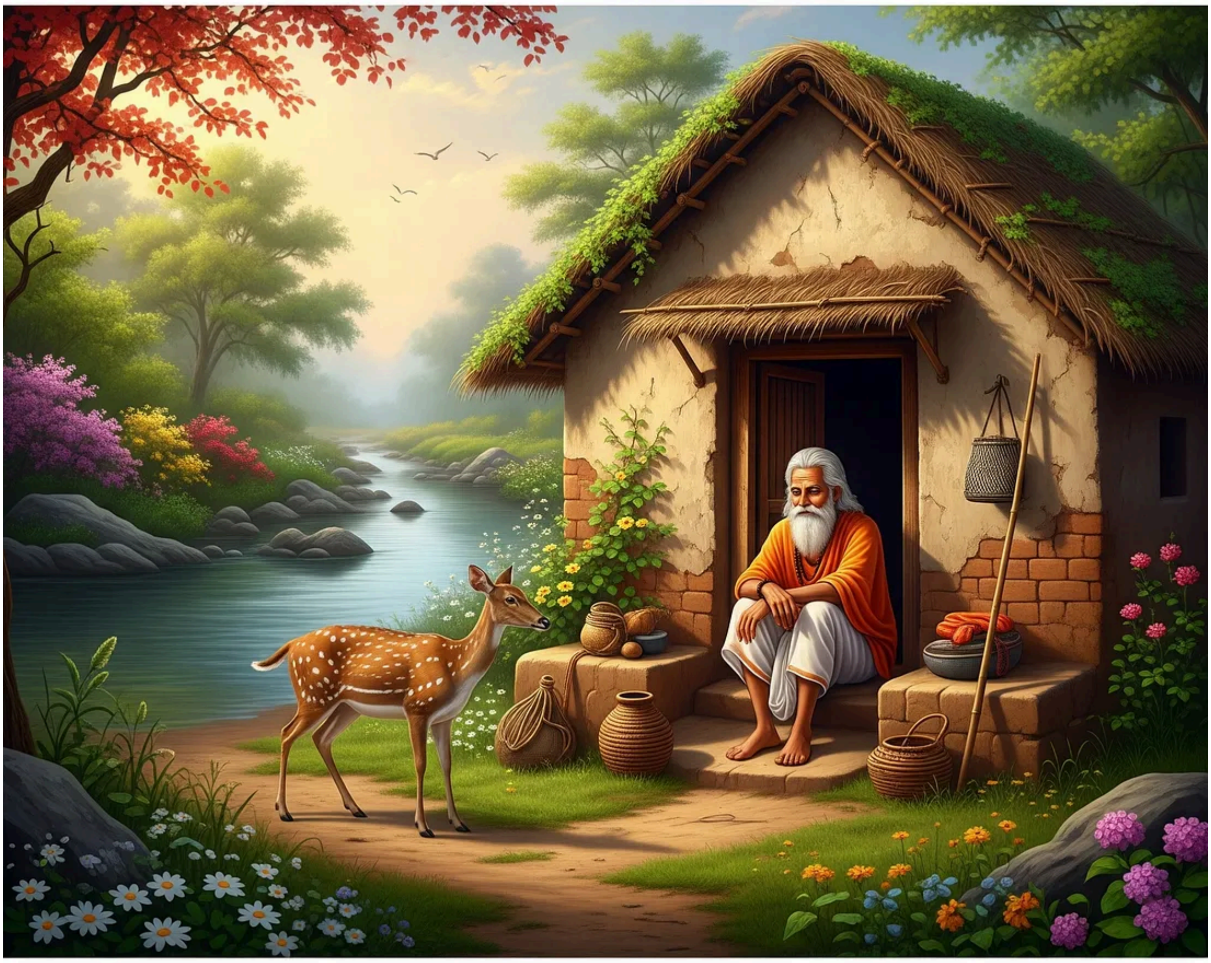
Now what did Parikshit do facing such a situation? He wasted no time. When he came to know that he had only a week’s time to live, he immediately crowned his son as the ruler, gave all his personal property in donation and cut off all his personal ties with the family. He then went to a secluded spot on the banks of river Ganga and sat on a fast unto death. There he met the rishis from whom he asked the same question: What should a person do when he comes to know that he has a week’s time to live?

The great rishis replied: Listen to the story of the Lord. Fill your mind with the stories of God and thus concentrate with all your might on Him. Let your thoughts continuously think of him and only him.

Parikshit asked: What will be the result of such an action ?
The rishis replied: To attain the Lord is the ultimate goal of Life. Even if you have wasted your entire life living a life of sense pleasures and done nothing to reach the Lord, but if you focus your last thoughts on Him and only Him, you will reach Him and your life will be deemed successful.
Thus my friend, the lesson that we should take away from the above story is that we too should think that we don’t have eternity to live

on Earth. Our time span is short and we don't know how much time we have left. Therefore, plan your week in such a way that you continuously contemplate the Lord of the Universe in your heart, even while being engaged in the affairs of the world. Thank you.

Ch.12: The story of Jada Bharata, karma and death.



Thinking and teaching on death has led us to the last point where I am going to share with you one more story and our bucket will be full. This story is the story from Srimad Bhagavatam, on the life of king Bharata, the ancestor of the pandavas who ruled Bharatvarsha as the sole monarch. After ripe old age, King Bharata decided to renounce his kingdom and go to the forest to meditate on the Self which is eternal and only true reality and thus break the bonds that tie him to this life. This is called Sannyasa in Hinduism, the last phase of life. The king built a little cottage of his own hands and ate berries and wild fruits to sustain his being. There he meditated on the self that is eternal. Days, months and years passed. Everything was going well but he saw a dear who came to the side of his river to drink water. At the same moment, a lion roared a little distance off. The dear became extremely terrified and without satisfying her thirst, jumped on the river. This extreme fright and sudden exertion made her give birth to a little fawn and immediately afterward she fell dead. The fawn fell into the water and was being carried rapidly away by the foaming stream, when it caught the eyes of the king.

The king rose from his seat of meditation and rescued the fawn, took it to his cottage, made a fire and with care and attention fondled the little thing back to life. Then the kindly sage took the fawn under his protection, bringing it up on soft grass and fruits. The fawn soon grew into a beautiful dear. Then he, whose mind was strong enough to break away from life-long attachment to power, position and family, became attached to the deer that he has saved. As he became fonder and fonder of the dear, the less he could concentrate his mind on the Self. He would worry about the dear when she would be out of his sight. Some years passed and death came to the royal sage. He was ready to die but he could not concentrate on the self but rather was worried about his little dear. What would happen to her? Who would take care of her once he was gone and thinking so his soul left the body.

As a result of this, in the next life he was born as a deer . But no karma is lost and all the great deeds done by him as a king and sage bore fruit. The deer remembered his past birth. He always left his companions and was instinctively drawn to graze near the hermitage where the Upanishads were preached.

After the usual years of the deer’s life had been spent, it died and was next born as the youngest son of a rich brahmin. In that life too, he remembered his past and from the beginning, he decided not to get entangled in the affairs of the world. He would speak rarely and lived his life as someone inert and insane. His thoughts were always on the infinite and he lived only to wear out his prarabdha Karma and so Bharata died after ripe old age and was freed forever from the bondage of birth.

Lesson: Even a small act of compassion done , when it developed into a powerful attachment, the king did not realise. Thus living with our families and loved ones, we too develop a powerful attachment to their existence. Our love for samsara binds us to this sad world. Thus it is very important to develop the attitude of non-attachment and continuously remember the lord of this universe and cut asunder all bonds that tie us down to this sad place and become the cause for our repeated births.

Conclusion:

My dear friend, I Maitreya, your guide has tried his best to give you the essence of what the best philosophies and world religions teach man about death. Death is not to be feared but accepted as an organic part of life. It’s not a tragedy that life ends but rather death gives man the opportunity to start over again afresh with a new life. It's an eternal journey in which we meet, stay and then get separated once again.

So I hope that reading this short ebook on death will give you a good perspective to adopt as far as death is concerned and will imbue your life with meaning and purpose. Thankyou for being patient. I hope you had a great read.